

# THE CULT OF 'ALID SAINTS IN THE FATIMID MONUMENTS OF CAIRO PART II: THE MAUSOLEA

The tombs and shrines of the Fatimid period in Cairo represent the earliest and largest related group of funerary monuments surviving from the first six centuries in Islam. Most of them have epigraphic or textual citations linking them with 'Alid saints. They were built or restored between 1122 and 1154, the years between the vizierate of Ma'mun al-Bata'ihi (1121-25) and the arrival of the head of al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib in Cairo. This was a period of both crisis and turmoil for the Fatimid government, whose spiritual credibility and political authority had been undermined by two succession crises (1094 and 1130) and by two periods of assassination (1121 and 1130).

This paper will argue that the appearance of these mausolea represented the architectural manifestation of an officially sponsored cult of 'Alid martyrs and saints that was used to generate support and loyalty for the Isma'ili Imam Caliph who claimed descent from the Prophet through his grandson al-Husayn. The beginnings of this policy under Badr al-Jamali (vizier from 1074 to 1094), who discovered the head of al-Husayn at Ascalon in 1090, and Ma'mun al-Bata'ihi, who built the mosque of al-Aqmar in 1125, were traced in the first part of this study ("The Mosque of al-Aqmar," *Muqarnas*, volume 1). Its culmination was marked by the reinterment of the head of al-Husayn in 1154 within the palace area of al-Qahira. That event also represented the merging of two separate funerary traditions: that of the court in a private shrine within the palace, and that of the local population in constructions located in the Qarafa al-Kubra, the great popular cemetery east of Fustat.

Al-Qahira, the royal city founded in 969, was at first accessible only to the household of the caliph, his troops, court, merchants, and purveyors, and others on official business. It was a walled enclosure of roughly one square kilometer, several kilometers to the north-east of the then flourishing and populous quarters of

Fustat al-Askar and al-Qata'i<sup>c</sup>, the commercial and manufacturing area of Misr, in which most of the Sunni and local population lived and worked.

The Fatimid caliphs in Cairo, following the *sunna* of the Prophet, were buried in their residences, apparently also the custom of the Fatimids in North Africa.<sup>1</sup> When al-Mu'izz entered al-Qahira in 972, he brought with him the bodies of his predecessors—'Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi (the founder of the dynasty), al-Qa'im, his grandfather, and al-Mansur, his father—which he reburied in a tomb constructed in the interior of the Eastern Palace. Eventually he, too, was buried there, and in time the tomb also received the mortal remains of eight of his successors, their wives, and their children. This funerary chapel was known as the *turbat al-za'farān*, or "tomb of saffron," a name deriving from the custom of anointing the tombs with that substance. No description remains of this tomb; al-Maqrizi mentions only that the incumbent caliphs called on their ancestral graves there whenever they left or entered the palace, as well as on Fridays, the 'Id al-Fiṭr, and other state holidays.<sup>2</sup>

The custom of house burial in Egypt was not confined to the Fatimid caliphs. The story of Sayyida Nafisa seems to have been characteristic of the early stages of the cult of saints. She was the daughter of al-Hasan b. Zayd b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and among the first of the 'Alid families who left the Hijaz in the early years of the ninth century to resettle in Fustat. She was a woman renowned for her piety and to whom miracles were attributed. When Imam Shafi'i, the Sunni legist and founder of one of the four schools of Sunni Islam, who used to exchange hadiths with her, died in 820 his body was taken to her house so that she might recite prayers over it.<sup>3</sup> At her own death in 824, the people of Fustat begged her husband, Ishaq ibn Ja'far al-Sadiq, not to take her body back to Medina, but to bury it in Fustat because of her *baraka* (blessing or

grace from God).<sup>4</sup> She was buried in her house in a grave reportedly dug by her own hands.<sup>5</sup> Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khallikan says: "The spot on which her house stood is now occupied by her mausoleum. ... This tomb has a great reputation, experience having shown that prayers said near it are answered."<sup>6</sup>

In Islam, the earliest instance of a cemetery is that of Baqī<sup>6</sup> al-Gharqad at Medina. The first person to be buried in it was 'Uthman ibn Maz'un, a Companion of the Prophet, who died in 626. Eventually members of the Prophet's family, his descendants, and other Muslim notables were buried there, and it became an honor to be granted a final resting place among the *ahl al-bayt*, the Companions of the Prophet and friends of God.<sup>7</sup> A similar development must have taken place around the tomb of Sayyida Nafisa, as inhabitants of Fustat and al-'Askar sought a final resting place near her grave and the graves of other 'Alids nearby,<sup>8</sup> and this was one of the reasons behind the development and expansion of the Qarafa, the great public cemetery that lay in the desert to the south and east of the inhabited areas.

In their description of the various sites in the Qarafa, the literary sources refer constantly to their "holiness," to their "ability to answer prayers," and "to the *baraka* which they give to the people who visit them."<sup>9</sup> For example, in 1083 Abu'l-Husayn Muhammad ibn Jubayr remarks of the Qarafa that "this is also one of the wonders of the world for the tombs [*mashāhid*], of his Companions, of the kindred of Muhammad, of his Companions, of the followers of the Companions, of learned men and ascetics, and of saintly men renowned for their miracles and of wonderful report."<sup>10</sup> Ibn Batuta, in 1327, reports:

At [old] Cairo, too, is [the cemetery of] al-Qarafa, a place of vast repute for blessed power, whose special virtue is affirmed in a tradition related by al-Qurtubi among others, for it is a part of the mount of al-Muqattam, of which God has promised that it shall be one of the gardens of Paradise. These people build in the Qarafa beautiful domed pavilions [*qubab*] and surround them by walls so that they look like houses, and they construct chambers in them and hire the services of Qur'an readers, who recite night and day. The people go out every Thursday evening to spend the night there with their children and womenfolk and make a circuit of the famous sanctuaries.<sup>11</sup>

The accounts depict the central position of the Qarafa in the lives of the common people. The various tomb complexes and their dependencies emerge as both a religious and a social meeting place. The traditional Islamic practices of *ziyarat al-qubūr* (the visitation of

burial places) and reliance on intercessory prayers appear well established by the early tenth century. Visiting the dead was a form of piety especially attractive to women, because it made up for their absence at the formal, exclusively male, communal mosque prayers and because it constituted an approved form of outing in an otherwise restricted and well-supervised life. This popular cult of the dead, however, was at variance with royal and official Fatimid procedures, according to which the veneration of the caliphal ancestors was strictly a family and court cult and one in which therefore most of the Fatimids' new Egyptian subjects—who in any case did not give unreserved allegiance to Isma'ili teaching—would not have been allowed to participate.

### MAUSOLEA BUILT AROUND 1122

*Mashhad of Umm Kulthum.* The mashhad of Umm Kulthum (1122; plate 1) is located in that area of the Qarafa reserved by 'Anbasa, the last Arab governor of Egypt (851-56), for the *ahl al-bayt* and descendants of 'Ali.<sup>12</sup> In it are buried the al-Tabataba family, prominent Ashraf descended from al-Hasan.<sup>13</sup> It was a representative of this family, who as *naqib*, or chief, of the 'Alid families living in Fustat, received the Fatimid imam al-Mu'izz when he arrived in the city founded by his victorious general Jawhar. Ibn Khallikan says that the tomb of Abu Muhammad ibn al-Tabataba "was in high repute for the fulfillment of prayers offered up at it."<sup>14</sup>

The mashhad is marked by a marble plaque on the qibla wall to the right of the mihrab, which gives the date of Umm Kulthum's death as 4 Shawwal 254 (26 September 868).<sup>15</sup> All the sources<sup>16</sup> agree that she was the daughter of al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq b. Muhammad al-Baqir b. 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, buried among the Ashraf of the house of 'Ali in the Qarafa. Muhammad ibn al-Zayyat adds that hers was a large mashhad, against which the mashhad of Zaynab abutted, and that a number of the Ashraf were buried in it. The most interesting information is supplied by Ibn Muyassar: "In the year 516 [1122] Ma'mun [al-Bata'ihi] ordered his agent (*wakil*) Shaykh Abu'l-Barakat Muhammad ibn 'Uthman to direct his steps toward the seven masjids which were between the mountain and the Qarafa, the first of which was the mashhad of Sayyida Zaynab and the last of which was the mashhad of Kulthum. He restored their buildings and repaired what was ruined

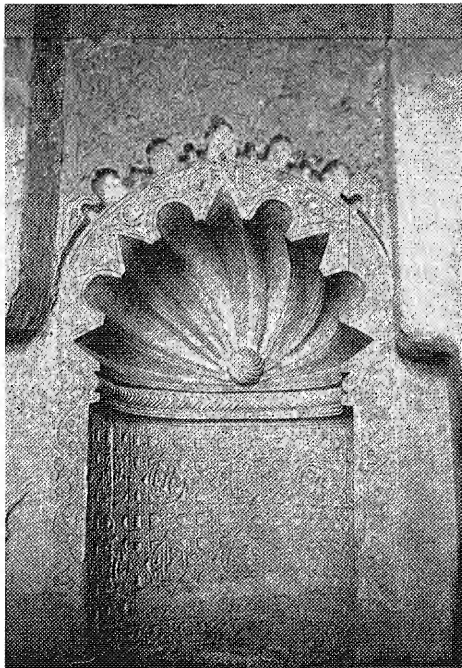


Plate 1. Mashhad of Umm Kulthum. Mihrab.

among them, and he placed in each mashhad a marble plaque with its name and the date of the restoration."<sup>17</sup>

Nothing remains of this mashhad now except its very beautiful and unusual stucco mihrab. A fluted shell hood of ten ribs emanating from a raised spiral boss occupies the semi-dome above the concave recess. Two rows of eight-pointed stars and hexagons outlined by pearly borders fill the recess, five stars to a row; each star contains either the name "Muhammad" or the words "and 'Ali'": the top row begins and ends with "and 'Ali,'" and the second with "Muhammad." 'Ali's name had appeared previously in the roundel at the apex of the dome of the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali, but this is the first surviving instance of its appearance as a part of the decorative scheme of a mihrab, and it is particularly interesting because al-Ma'mun's mihrab in the Aqmar mosque has not survived. In the qibla wall, separated from the main mihrab, are two plain niches.

Creswell has proposed that the original ground plan of the mashhad was a square; its central portion was covered by a dome; and it was set off on three of its sides by an ambulatory.<sup>18</sup> The two side niches would thus have been mihrabs at the end of each of the side aisles.

*Mashhad of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib.* The mashhad of al-Qasim, called Abu Tayyib in the *Index to Mohammedan Monuments in Cairo*, was also built in 1122. It is situated just in front of the mashhad of his daughter Umm Kulthum. Today all that survives of it is a square room and three niches that were once mihrabs, now visible in the qibla wall of the tomb compound, or *hawsh*. Creswell plausibly suggested that the plan was originally one of a domed chamber with an ambulatory on three sides and a mihrab in each aisle, similar to the plan he proposed for the mashhad of Umm Kulthum.<sup>19</sup>

Of the literary sources that mention al-Qasim Abu Tayyib, Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Harawi includes the graves (*qubūr*) of Qasim b. Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq and of his sons 'Abd Allah (d. 875), and Yahya (d. 877), among those of the Ashraf;<sup>20</sup> Ibn Zayyat adds that he was one of the guardians of the people for the hadiths of the Prophet, that he had a hawsh, and that his children were buried there. It is relevant to note that al-Qasim's father Muhammad al-Dibaj, during the course of a revolt in Mecca in 815, had taken the title of Commander of the Believers. He was the first 'Alid after al-Husayn ibn 'Ali to receive the oath of allegiance from the people of Medina, but he ended by abdicating and publicly confessing his error, and was banished from the Hijaz. After the failure of his father's uprising, al-Qasim, accompanied by his daughter Umm Kulthum and his sons, came to live in Egypt.<sup>21</sup> Actually, the cenotaphs of al-Qasim's sons, 'Abd Allah and Yahya, are now to be found in the mausoleum known as Yahya al-Shabih, erected about 1150 in the hawsh of the mashhad of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib.

A mihrab, the plaster cast of which is now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, was found about four meters from the mausoleum of Yahya al-Shabih,<sup>22</sup> in the compound of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib's family. An analysis of the mihrab's decoration reveals that stylistically it belongs to the tenth century, but that the fluting along the conch was added later.<sup>23</sup> An inscription once framed the mihrab's arch; the flutes were added at the expense of the inscription, but traces of it remain. The ribbing of the conch and the fluted edge closely parallel those in the mihrab of Umm Kulthum,

so it seems likely that this mihrab belonged to one of the edifices al-Ma'mun ordered restored.

*Mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja'fari.* The mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja'fari (plate 2), built about 1122, is located in the general vicinity of the mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa. Although it is not mentioned in any of the sources, it is supposed that Muhammad al-Ja'fari was a son of Ja'far al-Sadiq b. Muhammad al-Baqir b. 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib.<sup>24</sup> The mausoleum is a small, cubical building. It has a dome with a keel-arched profile resting on a transition zone with alternate trefoil squinches and similar trefoil-arched windows. Outside, the west side of the tomb abuts a preexisting enclosing wall, whose cresting consists of a series of inverted Y's, the stems of which have a little cap.<sup>25</sup>

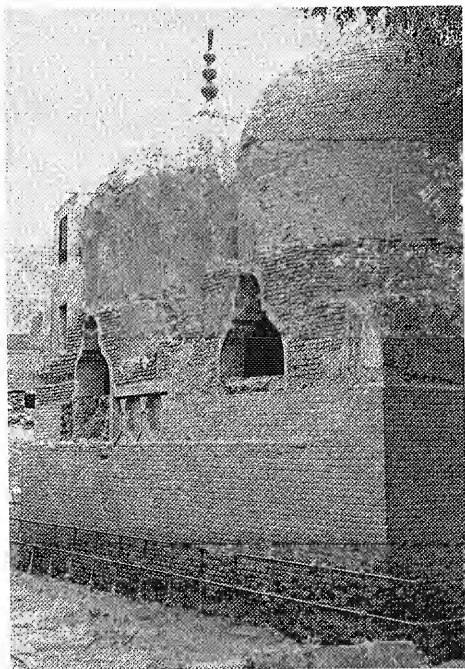


Plate 2. Mausolea of Muhammad al-Ja'fari (plain dome) and Sayyida 'Atika (fluted dome). General view.

Inside, the mausoleum is unadorned except for a few words of a Koranic inscription still visible in the south corner and on the north wall, which once encircled the mausoleum just below the transition zone (plate 3). It is from Koran 7:54: "Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days—then sat Himself upon the Throne, covering the day with the night it pursues urgently—and the sun, and the moon, and the stars subservient, by His command. Verily, His are the creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of All Being. Call on your Lord, humble and secretly; He loves not transgressors." No decoration has survived on the mihrab; it is today a plain double-arched niche in the south wall.

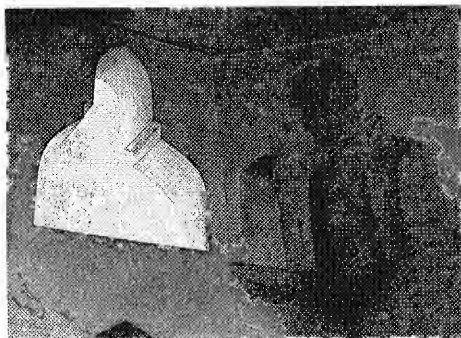


Plate 3. Mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja'fari. South corner, fragment of Koranic inscription.

*Mausoleum of Sayyida 'Atika.* The mausoleum of Sayyida 'Atika, built about 1122, is also not mentioned in any of the sources, and its attribution is uncertain. P. Ravaisse ascribed it to 'Atika, an aunt of the Prophet;<sup>26</sup> in the tomb itself a modern printed sign identifies 'Atika as a Meccan lady of great beauty, married successively to 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Bakr, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam, and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, the governor of Egypt during the caliphate of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. All these men were killed, and when Caliph 'Ali wished to marry her, she said, "I think too much of you for you to be slain; for the people say, 'whoever loves martyrdom should marry 'Atika.'"<sup>27</sup>

Its form is that of a small, square edicule, with a dome of a keel-arched profile and ribbed on the outside. Inside, the sixteen flutes converge in a flat central circle

which bears no traces of an inscription. The dome rests on a transition zone of trefoil squinches alternating with trilobed windows. Except for the ribbed dome the building is very similar to that of Muhammad al-Jaʿfari. When the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe restored this mausoleum in 1915-19, it discovered that its northern wall was actually part of the forecourt belonging to the mausoleum of Muhammad al-Jaʿfari.<sup>28</sup> Today part of the ancient cresting can still be seen embedded in its western and northern walls.

The band of Koranic inscription, which begins in the corner of the west wall under the transition zone, is 2:255-56 (the Throne Verse):

God—there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what lies before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His throne comprises the heavens and earth, the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the All-high, the All-glorious. No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in God has laid hold of the most firm handle that shall not be broken; God is He who Heareth, Knoweth.

The Throne Verse is not an unusual quotation to find in an oratory, whether Sunni or Shiʿi: in fact it appears in the earliest Muslim monument, the Dome of the Rock. For a Shiʿi, however, the mention of “those who intercede with Him by His leave” would have meant the Prophet and the People of his House.

Of the double-arched mihrab only the decoration of the upper half remains (plate 4). A blind cresting of interlacing spheres and triangular caps crowns it; next a pearl border separates the cresting from the spandrel of the first arch which contains two bosses, each set off by pearl borders, the interiors of which have not survived.<sup>29</sup> Vegetal forms fill the area between the bosses; another pearl border frames the outer arch of the niche, on which there are a few words from Koran 15:47: “We shall strip away all rancor that is in their breasts; as brothers they shall be upon couches set face to face.”<sup>30</sup> Originally this inscription started in the right-hand corner of the qibla wall, ran over the arch of the mihrab, and finished in the left-hand corner.<sup>31</sup>

Behind the tomb of ʿAtika on the north wall is a little niche that suggests the remains of an earlier mausoleum; perhaps a complex of tombs once existed there of which only these two have survived. The shrine

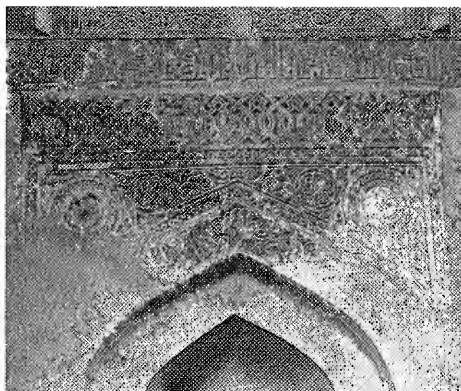


Plate 4. Mausoleum of Sayyida ʿAtika. Mihrab.

of ʿAtika obviously postdates its neighbor, but not by much. Stylistic comparisons suggest 1120-25,<sup>32</sup> and Ibn Muyassar's date of 516 (1122) is borne out by the part of verse 15:47 around the mihrab: “as brothers they shall be on couches set face to face.” The verse clearly had special significance in the light of the Nizari schism and succession controversy, which was the crucial political issue of the period, but especially so in 1122, just after the vizier al-Afdal had been assassinated by Nizari emissaries.

All these tombs of 1122 honor *ahl al-bayt* who are descendants of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq: a son, Muhammad; a grandson, al-Qasim; and al-Qasim's three children (Umm Kulthum, ʿAbd Allah, and Yahya). There is no explanation in the sources as to why the vizier al-Maʿmun selected these specific individuals, but al-Qasim and his children emigrated from the Hijaz after the unsuccessful uprising of his father Muhammad al-Dibaj, and were among the first ʿAlid families to resettle in Egypt.<sup>33</sup> The mihrab from the hawsh of the al-Qasim family indicates that there might also be another relative. These account possibly for four of al-Maʿmun's 1122 restorations. The tomb of Sayyida ʿAtika, by being juxtaposed with that of Muhammad al-Jaʿfari and with its epigraphic allusions, might account for a fifth. Rather than a Meccan lady or the aunt of the Prophet, she may have been a descendant or connection of the family of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. The mausoleum of Zaynab, mentioned as abutting on that of Umm

Kulthum, is hard to identify. There is in Cairo a shrine to Sayyida Zaynab which today exists only in its restored nineteenth-century form near the mosque of Ibn Tulun. In it there reposes the cenotaph of Zaynab bint Yahya al-Mutawwaq (the brother of Sayyida Nafisa), who faithfully served her paternal aunt for forty years, and in whose arms Nafisa is said to have died.<sup>34</sup>

#### MAUSOLEA BUILT BETWEEN 1133 AND 1153

*Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya.* The mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya (1133) is situated in the same general enclosure as the tombs of Sayyida 'Atika and Muhammad al-Ja'fari. Although it is one of the largest and most impressive of the surviving mashhads, for some reason only two of the sources give it even a passing mention: al-Harawi includes the mashhad of Ruqayya, daughter of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, among those he places near the mosque of Ibn Tulun; Ibn al-Zayyat, in writing of the grave of Sayyida al-Sharifa Maryam, says it was built by Caliph al-Hafiz, "the same one who built the mashhad of Ruqayya, that is the mashhad of *al-ruḡyā* [the 'vision]".<sup>35</sup>

Little is known of this Ruqayya except that she was 'Ali's daughter, though not by Fatima, and was reportedly buried in Damascus.<sup>36</sup> That a shrine should have been built for her in Cairo in response to a dream or a vision was for that particular time not so extraordinary. Supernatural interventions were not uncommon motives for the religious constructions of Islam, and in the Fatimid period we have already cited the example of Badr al-Jamali's discovery of the head of al-Husayn.<sup>37</sup> In the twelfth century, and especially in the reign of al-Hafiz, the founding of saints' tombs was apparently commonly justified by miraculous discoveries of relics or by visions.

The Mashhad of the Light built over the grave of Sayyida al-Sharifa Maryam, a descendant of the Tabataba, is a case in point. It was so named because people had seen a pillar of light rising to the sky from that place, and when this miracle was reported to al-Hafiz, he ordered the spot to be excavated. A tablet recounting the saint's genealogy was uncovered over the grave. Al-Hafiz then had the mashhad built and covered with a dome. It soon became noted for answering prayers.<sup>38</sup>

The shrine of Ruqayya is securely dated by an inscription, painted under the ribs of the dome, which begins with Koran 7:54-56:

Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days—Then sat Himself upon the Throne, covering the day with the night it pursues urgently—and the sun, and the moon, and the stars subservient, by His command. Verily, His are the creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of all Being. Call on your Lord, humbly and secretly; He loves not transgressors. Do no corruption in the land, after it has been set right; and call on Him fearfully, eagerly—Surely the mercy of God is nigh to the good-doers.

It continues with "and God's greetings and abundant blessings upon our lord Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets, and upon his good and pure family in the month of Dhu'l-Qa'da in the year 527" (September 1133).<sup>39</sup> The Koranic verses would have had great significance for a Shi'ite. The seven days of creation are mentioned. According to the Isma'ilis, these days prefigure prophetic cycles: Muhammad had been the sixth major prophet, and the seventh "day" was at hand, with the triumph of Isma'ilism. The mystical number seven was of great importance to the Isma'ilis, and this was another reason why they were called Seveners. "The sun, the moon, and the stars" are also allusions to Muhammad, Fatima, and al-Hasan and al-Husayn who existed as light before the creation of the world.<sup>40</sup>

In the mausoleum of Muhammad al-Ja'fari enough of the Koranic inscription remains to identify it with this same pregnant verse (7:54). It is likely, judging from the total space along the walls, that at least verse 53 preceded it, with the words "Our Lord's Messengers came with the truth. Have we intercessors, or shall we be returned," and then. "They have indeed lost their souls, and that which they were forging has gone astray from them." These words would have been aimed at those who did not accept the *ta'wil* of the reigning imam, that is, at those who disputed his imamate by using "forged" claims: dissident Shi'ites and Sunnis in the period of Muhammad al-Ja'fari and, at the period of this neighboring mausoleum (Sayyida Ruqayya), dissident Isma'ilis as well.

The sanctuary of the mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya is a rectangle, separated into three bays, the central one covered with a dome (plates 5-6), the side ones with flat wooden roofs. There are five mihrabs in the shrine: three in the qibla wall, and two on either side of the entrance. The number five is almost as significant as seven for the early Isma'ilis. Mystical pentads figure often in Isma'ili doctrine,<sup>41</sup> and five is the number of the People of the Cloak: Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn.

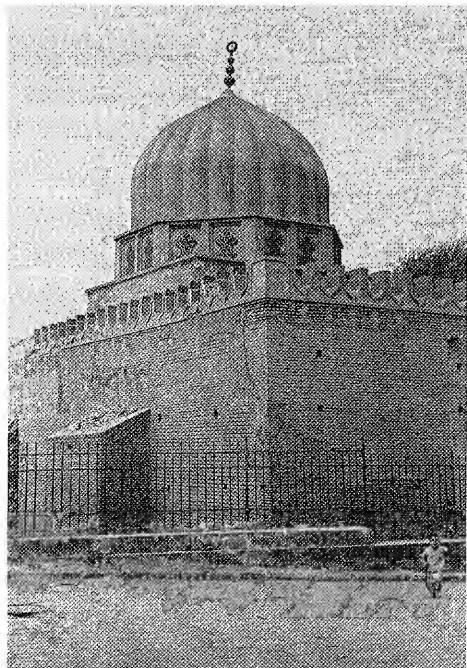


Plate 5. Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. Exterior view of rear and dome.

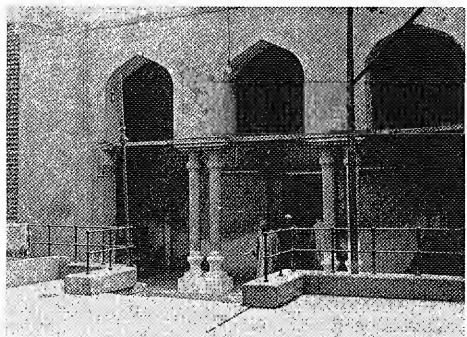


Plate 6. Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. Entrance to sanctuary.

The main mihrab (plate 7) in the central bay is a handsome example of late Fatimid stucco work. Sixteen ribs radiate from a central boss (plate 8), in which the name “‘Alī” is surrounded six times by the name “Muhammad.” This is again significant, for Muhammad is the Prophet in whom all the prophets are contained, and is the “seal” of the prophets. On the seventh day, it would be the seed of ‘Alī, the imam who is in all the imams, who would bring the reign of God on earth, when he would “seat himself upon the throne.”<sup>42</sup>

The sixteen ribs terminate in an arch with a fluted edge laid against two rows of flat niches. The apex of the arch meets a band of ribbon-like design, two empty bosses are in its spandrels. Above, a band of Koranic inscription, a fragment of 33:33, reads, “O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination.” Analogies to the elements of this

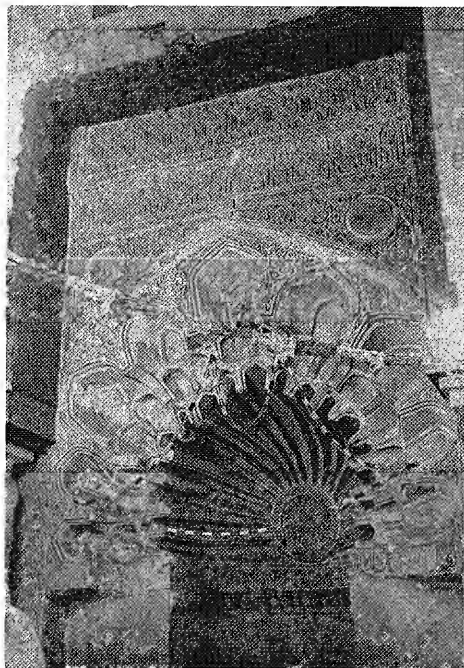


Plate 7. Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. Main mihrab



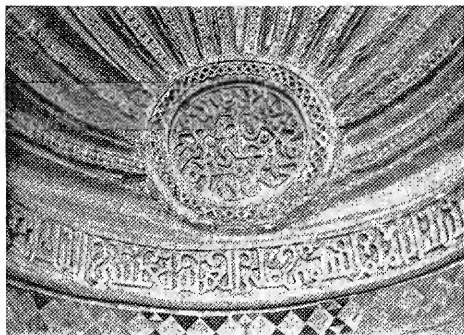


Plate 8. Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. Main mihrab, central medallion.

mihrab, such as the interlocking "Muhammad"'s around the name of 'Ali, Koran 33:33, and the fluted shape of the hood, appear on the façade of al-Aqmar, and one can conjecture that this direct imitation on a mashhad corroborates the hypothesis that more than just a mosque was intended for al-Aqmar.

Each side bay has a mihrab (plate 9), smaller than the main one but similar to each other, crowned by a cresting of seven rounded bud shapes separated by

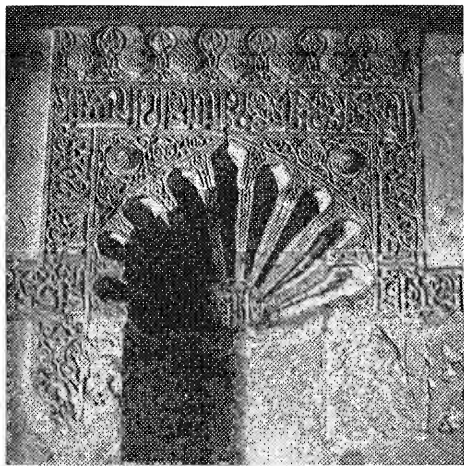


Plate 9. Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. Side mihrab, sanctuary.

trilobed leaves.<sup>43</sup> The two bosses in the spandrels have been defaced. The main boss has the name "Allah" from which radiate the eight ribs with U-shaped endings that provide the arch around the whole. A Koranic inscription band, starting and ending in the corners of the bay, frames the whole. On the mihrab in the right bay is 25:10, "Blessed be He who, if He will, shall assign to thee better than that—gardens underneath which rivers flow, and He shall assign to thee palaces." On the mihrab in the left bay is 11:14, "And perform the prayer at the two ends of the day and of the night; surely the good deeds will drive away the evil deeds. That is a remembrance unto the mindful." These references to righteous deeds and their rewards are explained by the dome's inscription, which affirms God's majesty and His gift of the Family of the Prophet as intercessors and examples for mankind.

Two more mihrabs outside the shrine on either side of the entrance (plate 10) in the narthex are similar to

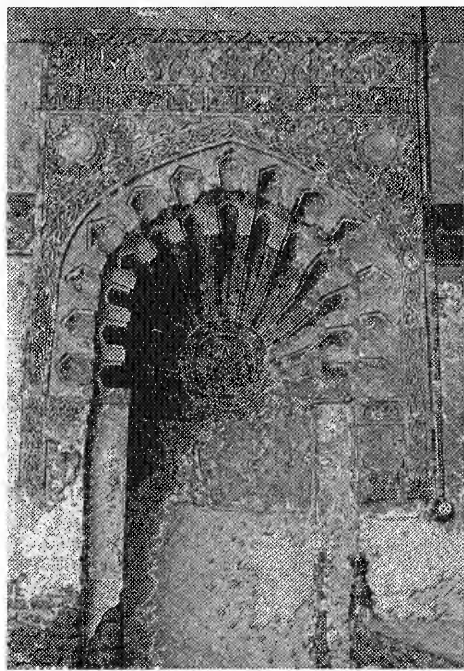


Plate 10. Mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. Porch mihrab.



the two lesser interior mihrabs, except that their cresting is of interlacing angular and round shapes resembling the cornice of the main mihrab and that of Sayyida ʿAtika. The right mihrab, just below the cresting, begins with a fragment of Koran 28:31, "Draw near and fear not, for surely thou art in security," and ends with the last part of 26:99: "Serve thy God, until the Certainty comes to thee." On the left mihrab the Koranic citation is 5:55, "Your friend is only God, and His Messenger, and the believers who perform the prayer and pay the alms, and bow them down." Both Shiʿi and Sunni commentators take this verse as one of the Koranic proofs of ʿAlī's right to the Imamate of the Muslim community, since it was revealed to the Prophet while ʿAlī was in prayer.<sup>44</sup>

A tiny fragment of decoration survives on the outside face of the building. That, combined with the remains of wall abutments on the façade, led A. Patricolo, one of the architects in charge of restoring the shrine in 1915-19 for the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, to argue that the plan of the shrine originally included a courtyard.<sup>45</sup> If it did, then its general plan would resemble that of the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali.

Under the dome is a splendid cenotaph whose inscriptions shed further light on the period and the architectural context of this mashhad:

[Side 2, after the bismillah and Koran 112] "Say: 'He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge, Who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one.'" This is the tomb of Sayyida Ruqayya, daughter of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī ibn Abī Talib, God's blessings be upon him and upon all the imams who are his descendants and God bless our Lord Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets [33:33:] "O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and with cleansing to cleanse you." [44:51-54:] "Surely the God-fearing shall be in a station secure among gardens and fountains, robed in silk and brocade, set face to face. Even so; and we shall espouse them to wide-eyed hours." [Side 3, 113:1-3:] "Say: 'I take refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak from the evil of what He has created, from the evil of darkness when it gathers, from the evil of women who blow on knots.'" The building of this blessed tomb was ordered by the noble [female] personage, the Amiriyya, whose agent was the Qadī Maknun, servant of al-Hafiz, by the hand of the excellent Abu Turab Haydara ibn Abī'l-Fath; may God have mercy upon him, in the year 533 [1138-39]. [11:73:] "The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O People of the House!" [7:54:] "Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days—Then sat Himself upon the Throne, covering the day with the night it pursues urgently—and the sun, and the moon, and the stars."<sup>46</sup>

The lady of this inscription, the widow of al-Amir, al-Maqrizi tells us, "was a woman of piety, generosity, virtue, and full of the fear of God. She used to send to members of the Prophet's family for prayers."<sup>47</sup> He then tells the following anecdote:

Among the monuments of the Qarafa there is a small fountain and minaret, and it is known as the Masjid of Mercy [*al-rahma*]. Abu Turab al-Suwwal, who was the agent [*wakil*] of the personage who built the mosque of al-Andalus, and its ribat, and the mosque of Ruqayya, was in charge of building it. ... And it was to this place that Abu Turab brought the son of al-Amir in a basket of reeds in which were dishes of cooked leeks and onions and carrots, and the baby in swaddling clothes was on the bottom with the food above him, and he brought him to the cemetery and the wet nurse suckled him in this mosque, and he concealed the matter from al-Hafiz until the baby grew up and began to be called Kufayfa, "little basket." Later, after the death of Abu Turab, the boy was slandered to al-Hafiz by Abu ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Jawhari, and he took the child and opened his veins, and he died. Then al-Jawhari went to Damietta where he died in the year 528 [1134].<sup>48</sup>

The Imam of the Period and the Age would thus have been for many the infant son and legitimate heir, al-Tayyib, without whom there is no intercessor for the faithful believers, and who was believed to have been murdered by al-Hafiz. The Tayyibi Ismaʿilis, or Bohras, usually state that the boy, the true imam, was smuggled out of Egypt to Yemen, and al-Hafiz, who had no legitimacy, was allowed to rule the collapsing Egyptian state. The reminder that it is God who creates and disposes and the mention of wicked women (perhaps jealous ladies of the palace who would let mischief occur to the child) take on a poignant quality in this context. The choice of Ruqayya, a shadowy female figure, as a "cover" for a structure of special significance to a few initiates would not be implausible.

*Mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa.* The present mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa was built in the Ottoman period. Of the Fatimid shrine nothing remains except the site itself and some woodwork now in the Museum of Islamic Art. But the history of the mashhad is important because it is a tomb whose prominence dates primarily to the Fatimid period.<sup>49</sup>

Sayyida Nafisa was buried, according to common early Islamic practice, in her own house, which the mausoleum later replaced. Al-Maqrizi is the only historian to give any details of the history of this mashhad: "It is said that the first of the builders over the grave was ʿUbayd Allah b. al-Sari b. al-Hakim, governor of Egypt" (821-27).<sup>50</sup> The next reference to it

comes from the time of Badr al-Jamali, who restored a door or gate (*bāb*).<sup>51</sup> Embedded in the north wall of the hawsh is some of the cresting in the form of a chain of inverted Y's which once decorated its boundaries; it probably dates to 1089, the time of that restoration.<sup>52</sup> In 1138, Caliph al-Hafiz renewed (*jaddada*) the dome over the grave and ordered a marble lining for the mihrab.<sup>53</sup> Surviving pieces of woodwork in the Museum of Islamic Art indicate that further restoration or embellishment was ordered by him in 1147.

A curious survival among the pieces of woodwork from this mashhad in the Museum of Islamic Art is the top half of a wooden screen or window filling.<sup>54</sup> In the shape of an arch, it is made up of panels of inscription in naskh characters (which in Egypt do not appear on monuments until the Ayyubid period). Occupying the central position of the arch, however, are two broad bands with an inscription in Kufic lettering. It can easily be read as Koran 33:33, the verse that had special significance to the Musta'li line of the Isma'ilis and was appropriate for an imam who was asserting his claim to legitimacy: "O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and with cleansing to cleanse you."

*Mausoleum of Ikhwat Yusuf.* The mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf (c. 1145; plate 11) lies at the foot of the Jabal Muqattam, practically underneath the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali, which during the medieval period was regarded as a holy site, one of the gardens of Paradise.<sup>55</sup> Before that it was an ancient Jewish cemetery called the Tur Sinai, which contained many relics of the Prophet Moses.<sup>56</sup>

An inscription on a stela set into the wall opposite the mihrab states: "This is the tomb of Ibrahim b. al-Yasa' b. al-'Is of the descendants of Abraham. Peace be upon them and [a few words missing] all and may God bless Muhammad and his family and peace."<sup>57</sup> Because of the style of the simple Kufic lettering, this inscription, although undated, has been placed around the year 1010. Ibn al-Zayyat mentions that Reuben, the brother of Yusuf, is also buried there and that the mausoleum was built as the result of a dream.<sup>58</sup>

The present building is an accretion of later rooms around the original Fatimid qubba. The oldest part is a square room with a plain dome of the keel-arched variety set upon a narrow octagonal drum with simple keel-arched windows in each face. Plain squinches alternate with single windows in the transition zone.

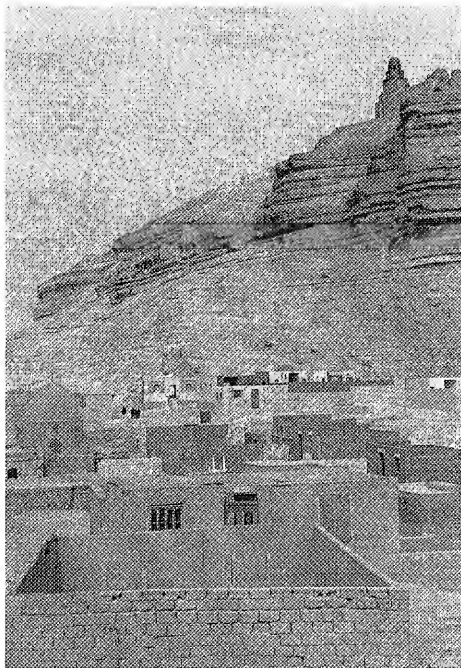


Plate 11. Mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf (far left); mashhad of Badr al-Jamali (above).

Occupying the whole of the qibla wall is a handsome triple mihrab (plates 12-13).<sup>59</sup> The elaborately plaited cresting which curves forward slightly over the main niche complex is similar, though not identical, to the pattern of the cresting over the main mihrab of Sayyida Ruqayya. The frieze over the two side niches is also similar, but not identical, to the frieze over the side mihrabs of the Ruqayya shrine, and consists of a repeating pattern of stemmed bud forms framed on each side by sloping half-palmette forms, punched and pierced.<sup>60</sup> The spandrels of the main arch are filled with leaf forms of a punched stamped design. The prototype for this treatment appears in the spandrels of Badr al-Jamali's mihrab, but the forms in the Ikhwat Yusuf mihrab bear a closer resemblance to the arabesque fillings around the arches of the small dome at the transept entrance of the mosque of al-Azhar which was added by al-Hafiz.<sup>61</sup>



Plate 12. Mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf. Central niche of triple mihrab.

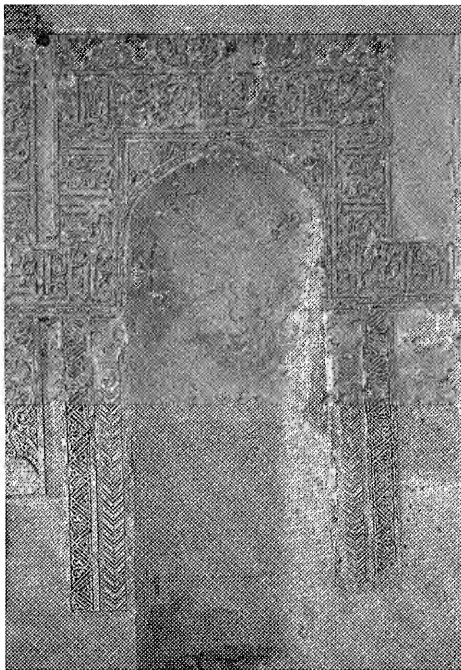


Plate 13. Mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf. Right side niche of triple mihrab.

A Koranic inscription is set in the outer frame of the mihrab complex. Beginning in the corner of the right niche and ending in the middle of the main niche is Koran 9:18, "Only he shall inhabit God's places of worship [*masjid*] who believes in God and the Last Day, and performs the prayer, and pays the alms, and fears none but God alone; it may be that those will be among the guided." Koran 2:255, the Throne Verse, begins at this point and ends in the left-hand corner of the qibla wall. Both verses are often used in places of prayer, but they seem to have had a heightened significance and popularity in the turbulent times of the late Fatimid period.

Around the arch of the main recess is a second inscription, Koran 112, which is the verse most often used on funerary stelae: "Say: 'He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, and has not

been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one.'"

Slender columns once supported the arch, but they are missing now; the arches of the side mihrabs are sustained by flat colonnettes. The guilloche in the border that appears to either side of the lowest part of the main recess is identical to those that frame the roundels in the restored sahn of al-Azhar dating to the time of al-Hafiz.

A comparative study of the dome and squinches of this mausoleum led Creswell to suggest a date of sometime before 1125.<sup>62</sup> Because of the analogies cited in the description of the mihrab to the mashhad of Ruqayya and the work attributed to al-Hafiz at al-Azhar, however, the mihrab seems to belong to 1132-47, when it was presumably added to a preexisting structure. If this is so, then this mausoleum is a product of the very active and officially encouraged building and restoration program of al-Hafiz's reign.

*Mashhad of Yahya al-Shabih.* The mashhad of Yahya al-Shabih (c. 1145; plate 14) contains the cenotaphs (plate 15) of the sons of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib: ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Qasim (plate 16) and his brother Yahya al-Shabih (so named because of his supposed resemblance to the Prophet). Like the mausoleum of the Ikhwat Yusuf, it was built over preexisting tombs.

The building has a dome of a keel-arched profile, ribbed on the outside, resting directly on an octagonal transition zone, with trilobed squinches alternating with windows of one light over two, similar to that of the mashhad of Sayyida Ruqayya. There is no historical-inscription band. The plan is that of a central domed chamber with an ambulatory on three sides. There is a small dome over the space in front of the mihrab (which is peculiar to this mashhad) and two small mihrabs to either side. It was the survival of this

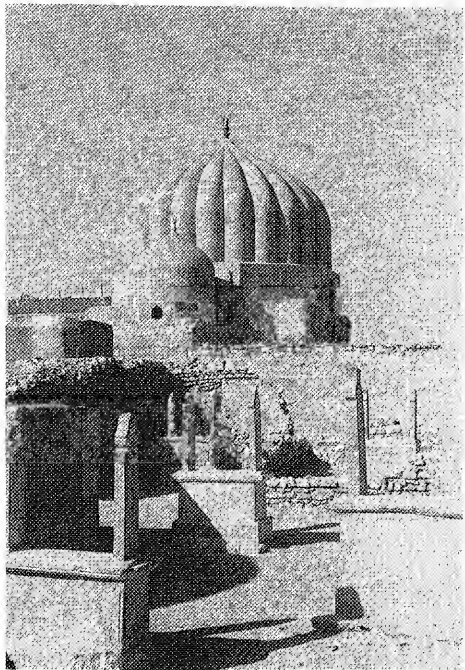


Plate 14. Mashhad of Yahya al-Shabih. Exterior view, seen from the rear.

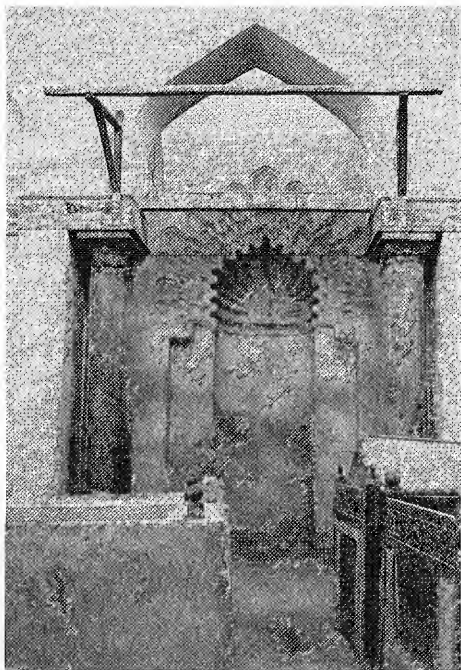


Plate 15. Mashhad of Yahya al-Shabih. Mihrab and cenotaphs.

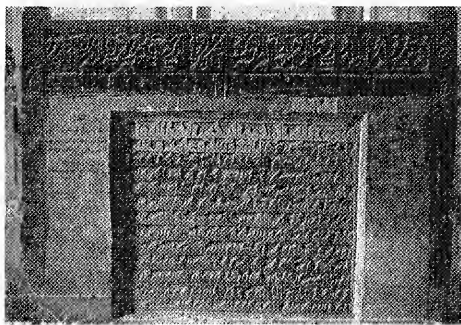


Plate 16. Mashhad of Yahya al-Shabih. Cenotaph of ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Qasim.

building's original plan that allowed Creswell to reconstruct the plans of the shrine of al-Qasim Abu-Tayyib and Umm Kulthum.<sup>63</sup>

The main mihrab is plain except for the hemisphere above the niche which has twelve ribs radiating from a central boss, itself resting on two ribs. Four concentric rows of fluting frame the edge of the arch. The design in the boss is of intersecting lines forming something which approaches a geometric star pattern. It is very likely that the medallion originally contained a design derived from the interlacing of the words "Muhammad" and "and 'Ali" (as on the main mihrab of Sayyida Ruqayya and the left niche of al-Aqmar), but the original design was effaced, and the present boss is the creation of the Comité's restorers.

Everything about this mashhad indicates that it was erected in the period of al-Hafiz after that of Sayyida Ruqayya. Its principal importance here, however, is that it contains the cenotaphs of ʿAbd Allah and Yahya ibn al-Qasim (as well as three others) who died in 875 and 877, respectively.

The two plaques on each cenotaph are virtually the same for both brothers, so we will give only those for Yahya:

[After the bismillah and Koran 112 and 2:255.] Yahya ibn al-Qasim, may God's mercy be upon him, died on Wednesday the 28 of Rajab in the year 263 [16 April 877]. O God forgive him and have mercy upon him and permit him to join his pious ancestors and pure forefathers. And God bless Muhammad the Prophet and the chosen people of his great house.<sup>64</sup>

On the other side of the cenotaph there is a marble stela that reads, after the bismillah:

Praise be to God for what He takes and what He gives, for trial and for affliction, for what He causes to die and what He causes to live, praise according to His good pleasure most to be praised and loved. To Thee be praise by virtue of the praise of those who have passed, high above the praise of those who have stayed; praise to fill all Thou hast created; attaining Thy desire, not hidden from Thee, not falling short of Thee, attaining the noblest goal of Thy good pleasure. [Koran 33:33:] "O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and with cleansing to cleanse you." [Koran 11:73:] "The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O people of the House!" [Koran 5:60-61:] "It is He who recalls you by night, and He knows what you work by day; then He raises you up therein, that a stated term may be determined; then unto Him shall you return, then He will tell you of what you have been doing. He is the Omnipotent over His servants. He sends recorders over you till, when any one of you is visited by death, Our messengers take him and they neglect not." This is what Yahya b. al-

Qasim b. al-Muhammad, b. Jaʿfar b. Muhammad b. ʿAli b. al-Husayn b. ʿAli b. Abi Talib testifies and attests to: he witnesses that there is no god save God alone, who hath no associate, and that Muhammad is his servant and Messenger, and God bless Muhammad and deliver unto him His peace.<sup>65</sup>

In style and character the Kufic script of these plaques is typical of ninth-century stelae, but the carved wooden frames that embellish the cenotaphs and cite the Throne Verse (2:255-56) are of the late Fatimid period. They were almost certainly attached to the preexisting cenotaphs when the new shrine was erected over them as another memorial to the *ahl al-bayt*.<sup>66</sup>

*Mausoleum of Muhammad al-Hasawati.* No historic inscription survives in the small, modest mausoleum of Muhammad al-Hasawati (c. 1150; plate 17), nor is it

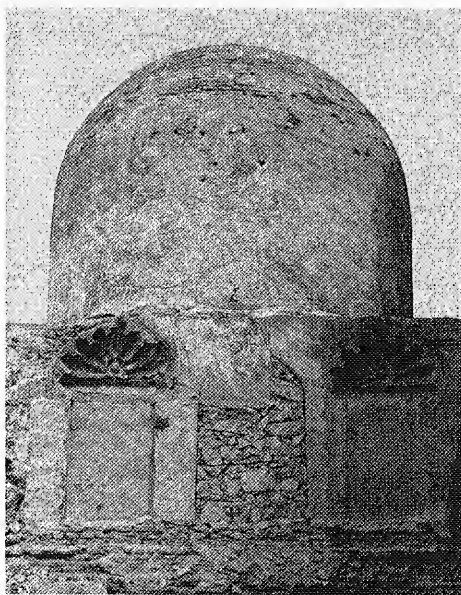


Plate 17. Mausoleum of Muhammed al-Hasawati. Exterior view.

mentioned in the sources. It is located in the *Qarafa*, not far from the mashhads of Umm Kulthum, al-Qasim Abu Tayyib, and Yahya al-Sabih. Now walled up, it was once open on three sides. The exterior is decorated; on either side of the central, keel-arched window is a

recessed niche with a hood in which ribs radiate from a small medallion. The corners of the transition zone are beveled. The main decoration of the interior is on the mihrab (plate 18), which practically fills up the whole

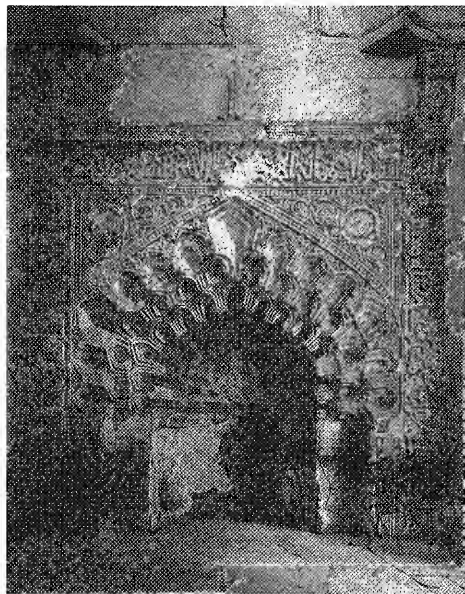


Plate 18. Mausoleum of Muhammed al-Hasawati. Mihrab.

qibla wall and is reminiscent of the central mihrab in the mashhad of Ruqayya. The blind cresting is missing, but the brackets to either side of the empty space in which it originally fitted still remain. The frieze which frames the mihrab contains the Throne Verse, Koran 2:255. The spandrel is outlined by a pearl border. The bosses in each corner are too mutilated to be described. In the hemisphere of the recess, twelve ribs radiate from a central roundel which probably had a pattern made up of the words "Muhammad" and "and 'Ali," but though a few *mim*'s are visible, the design has suffered too much for certainty. Supporting the main arch are two blind colonnettes, the capitals of which are inscribed with "Muhammad" on one side and "and 'Ali" on the other. The epigraphic evidence thus strongly suggests that this little mausoleum was also an 'Alid shrine, and probably the latest of the surviving

'Alid tombs. The chamfered outside corner, the denticulated mihrab arch, and the flat pilasters of the mihrab place it after Sayyida Ruqayya, i.e., after 1133. The indented ribbed niches on the exterior recall the shape of those in the restored sahn of al-Azhar, and their use as outside decorative elements predates those of the mosque of al-Salih Tala'i (1160). The mausoleum of al-Hasawati therefore probably belongs to the last years of al-Hafiz's reign.<sup>67</sup>

*Mashhad of al-Husayn.* The modern mashhad of Sayyidna al-Husayn is a restoration dating to the nineteenth century; all that remains of the original Fatimid structure is a piece of the decoration—the familiar S-curve outline of the Fatimid period<sup>68</sup>—over the gate at the south corner of the mosque.<sup>69</sup> From an archaeological point of view, nothing of the Fatimid period need detain us here, but the historical sources provide some interesting information about it relating to the cult of 'Alid saints.

Badr al-Jamali by his own account discovered the head of al-Husayn in 484 (1091). Ibn Muyassar, however, connects that discovery with al-Afdal. In 1098, after al-Afdal had taken Jerusalem from the Artuqids, "he entered Ascalon, where there was an abandoned place in which was the head of al-Husayn. He ordered it exhumed, perfumed, and transported in a basket to the most beautiful house in town. Then he ordered a mashhad constructed, and when it was ready, carrying the head pressed close to his chest, he went by foot to that place prepared for it and deposited it. It is said also that the mashhad was built by the commander of the armies, Badr al-Jamali, and finished by his son Shahanshah al-Afdal. Later the head was transported to Cairo where it arrived on Sunday, 8 Jumada II, 548 [September, 1153]."<sup>70</sup>

This story has its parallels in the account of the discovery of the head of Zayd b. 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, also attributed to al-Afdal, as it is related by al-Maqrizi.<sup>71</sup> In 740, Zayd had led an insurrection in Kufa against the authority of Caliph al-Hisham and had died in battle from an arrow wound in the forehead. His head was severed from his body and sent to Fustat, where it was displayed on the minbar of the mosque of 'Amr ibn al-'As until some people stole and buried it. Over this burial site, a mosque was built by the eunuch Muharras. By the twelfth century only the mihrab was visible amidst the ruins of that mosque, but when al-Afdal heard the story, he ordered excavations. The head was found, ex-

homed, anointed with unguents and perfumes, and taken to a house to await the completion of a new sanctuary, where it was placed on Sunday, 29 Rabiʿ I, 525 (1131).<sup>72</sup>

Nothing of this mashhad, which was located about two kilometers north of the mosque of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAs and one kilometer west of the mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa, survives, for it was completely restored twice, first in 1810 and again in 1864. The only trace of the earlier sanctuary is a marble plaque which states in Ottoman naskh: “This is the mashhad of Imam ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin [sic] b. Imam al-Husayn b. Imam ʿAli b. ʿImran [sic] b. ʿAbd al-Muttalib [sic]. May the benedictions of God be upon them all. In the year 549 [1154].”<sup>73</sup> This text was probably inspired by Fatimid inscriptions found in the mashhad before its Ottoman restorations, and the error in attribution and genealogy may reflect the Ottoman craftsman’s inability to decipher the original Kufic.

The dates in al-Maqrizi’s account and on the Ottoman plaque are also at variance, for by 525 (1131), the date given for the reinterment of Zayd’s head, al-Afdal ibn Badr had been dead for ten years, and his son al-Afdal Kutayfat, a Twelver Shiʿi, was in power. The year 549 (1154) corresponds more closely to the date on which, a year earlier, the head of al-Husayn arrived in Cairo.

Ibn al-Zayyat ends an account of the construction of the mashhad of the ʿAlid Sayyida al-Sharifa Maryam in the reign of al-Hafiz with the statement that al-Hafiz built many mosques and mashhads, “among them the mashhads of the heads, those of Sayyid Imam al-Husayn, the Mashhad Tibn in which is the head of Ibrahim, and the mashhad of Zayn al-ʿAbidin.”<sup>74</sup>

Ibrahim b. ʿAbd Allah b. Hasan b. ʿAli b. Abi Talib in Basra and his brother Muhammad in Medina organized the first major expression of ʿAlid dissatisfaction with Abbasid rule in 762.<sup>75</sup> The revolt was put down, Ibrahim was executed, and his head was sent to Fustat where it was said to have been displayed in the masjid of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAs (though there is no proof of this) and later interred in a masjid built for it north of the future al-Qahira, the Masjid al-Tibr,<sup>76</sup> also known as the Masjid al-Tibn. Tibr was a local chief in the Ikshidid period. After a rebellion against Kafur, the Ikshidid ruler, Tibr too was executed and his body disemboweled and stuffed with straw (*tibn*)—hence the alternate name of the place—and buried in the masjid that bore his name.<sup>77</sup>

Al-Maqrizi, quoting ʿAbd al-Zahir, also states that the mosque of al-Salih Talaʿi ibn Ruzzik was built in

1154 to contain the head of al-Husayn.<sup>78</sup> We know, however, that this mosque was built in 1160,<sup>79</sup> seven years after the head of al-Husayn reached Cairo. Although this mosque certainly was not built for a reliquary, it is possible that Ibn Ruzzik may originally have planned to build such a monument on this site, but had been deterred by the women of the court who insisted that the head be kept, like those of the Fatimid imams, within the palace. Since he had already begun construction on the site, Ibn Ruzzik finished by putting up an ordinary place of prayer. Creating a cult locus for the most precious of Shiʿi relics outside the southern gate of al-Qahira—where it would have been accessible not only to the royal city but to the people’s city, Fustat—would have been entirely in accord with the practice of the Fatimid viziers of the time. Ibn Ruzzik, however, was not so powerful or so free an agent as Maʾmun al-Bataʾihi or Badr al-Jamali. He had been called to power, and was subsequently opposed, by the intrigue-ridden and self-centred harem of the palace. When he tried to limit its power, he was destroyed.<sup>80</sup>

Obviously, the literary sources cannot be taken as completely reliable in their accounts of the founding of these mashhads; the details are similar, but the attributions conflict. Their very confusion, however, indicates the increasing interest and importance attached to the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* as a means of identifying the reigning caliphs with the righteous cause of the heroic ʿAlid dead and stimulating the flagging loyalties of their subjects. In this they appear to have had considerable success.

Ibn Jubayr has left us a description of the mashhad of al-Husayn which he visited in the Ayyubid period, thirty years after it was built: “To the right and left of the mausoleum are two chambers of exactly the same style and both lead into it.”<sup>81</sup> He goes on to relate how affected he was by the demonstration of popular veneration at the tomb:

We observed men kissing the blessed tomb, surrounding it, throwing themselves upon it, smoothing with their hands the *kiswa* that was over it, moving round it in a surging throng, calling out invocations, weeping and entreating Glorious God to bless the hallowed dust, and offering up humble supplications such as would melt the heart and split the hardest flint. A solemn thing it was, and an awe-inspiring sight.<sup>82</sup>

Ibn Jubayr was witnessing popular devotion under a Sunni regime. What he saw was only the remnant of the Fatimid-inculcated mass enthusiasm by which the rulers, in discovering relics and in building shrines over them, sought to bind the population to the dynasty. It is



not surprising that later, with the dynasty safely out of the way, the Ayyubids did not seek to tamper with these powerful emotions.

Mausolea constitute the largest single category of surviving monuments from the Fatimid period. Those designated by the literary sources as mashhads (Nafisa, Umm Kulthum, Ruqayya, al-Qasim Abu Tayyib, Yahya al-Shabih, and al-Husayn) are usually set within the confines of an open courtyard, and in all cases the plan, which indicates an ambulatory in the sanctuary or side rooms leading from the central domed chamber, offers a disposition especially favorable for the customary visitation of burial places.

These mausolea are also related in decoration. The Y-stem cresting appears first in the mosque of al-Azhar, then in the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali, after that in the compound of Sayyida Nafisa and in that of Muhammad al-Ja'fari, Sayyida 'Atika, and Sayyida Ruqayya. The mihrabs of these mausolea are also very similar in form and detail. The innovative years in decoration were 1121-25, as especially exemplified by the façade of al-Aqmar; after 1131, there are no really new additions to the decorative repertory.

Most of the mausolea, built or restored, are datable either from literary sources or inscriptions, or from stylistic similarity, to the years between 1122 and 1153. In the year after a major uprising of Nizari supporters, work was undertaken to restore seven mashhads of the *ahl al-bayt*, such as that of Umm Kulthum and others in the hawsh of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib. It is to that time also that the erection of the mausolea of Muhammad al-Ja'fari and Sayyida 'Atika can be attributed. After 1131, and another crisis in the Fatimid dynasty, not only were existing shrines restored (Sayyida Nafisa was restored at least twice in that time), but new tombs for earlier 'Alid saints were built, such as for Yahya al-Shabih who had been buried in the Qarafa centuries before. New mashhads such as Ruqayya, Maryam al-Sharifa, and Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin were also inspired by visions or miracles. In at least one case (Ruqayya) a mashhad was built for an 'Alid whom no one even pretended was buried in Cairo. This period also saw restorations of old tombs, such as that of the Ikhwat Yusuf, and new mausolea for those such as Muhammad al-Hasawati who can be considered from an analysis of the tomb's decorative features to have been a distantly related or minor 'Alid.

The mausolea of the earlier period (c. 1122) are concentrated in the Qarafa, in areas long designated as burial places for the *ahl al-bayt*, as in the cluster around

Sayyida Nafisa and that around the hawsh of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib (fig. 1). The shrines that date after 1131, however, are more scattered (e.g., the sites for the mausolea of Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin, Ikhwat Yusuf, and Sayyidna al-Husayn). The latest of the mashhads to be built (at a time when the imamate was at its weakest), that for Sayyidna al-Husayn, is also, as far as is known, the first to be built within the royal enclosure of al-Qahira.

Most of these mausolea were sacred to the memory of the Prophet's family (Nafisa, Umm Kulthum, al-Qasim Abu Tayyib, Muhammad al-Ja'fari, Ruqayya, Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin, Yahya al-Shabih, and al-Husayn). Judging by their location and the decorative use of the name of 'Ali, both 'Atika and Muhammad al-Hasawati perhaps also ought to be added to that list. In the period 1122-26, the honored dead are members of the same family (fig. 2), the descendants of Ja'far al-Sadiq who, because of an unsuccessful uprising in the 'Alid cause, were among the first 'Alid families to settle in Egypt. After 1131 they are martyrs who died violently in the cause of legitimacy: Ibrahim, the first to die rebelling against Umayyad rule; Zayd ibn Zayn al-'Abidin, rebelling against Abassid rule; and al-Husayn, the first and greatest of the Shi'i martyrs. Among the surviving tombs are also a great number honoring women: Nafisa, Umm Kulthum, 'Atika, and Ruqayya. Sayyida Nafisa was the first 'Alid officially honored by Badr al-Jamali, perhaps because she could represent conciliation at a popular level of the Shi'i rulers and the Sunni population. Sayyida Zaynab, mentioned in 1122, was Sayyida Nafisa's paternal niece and served her aunt long and devotedly. Nafisa, Zaynab, and Umm Kulthum, descendants of either al-Hasan or al-Husayn, represent early 'Alid families who had settled in Egypt in the early ninth century. The preponderance of female saints might be due also to their general appeal to the women of Fustat whose chief social and religious outlet was in the visitation of the dead in the Qarafa, and through whose sentiments their male kin might also be attracted to the dynasty. All these points indicate either an atmosphere of religious fervor for the saints or official manipulation to create such an atmosphere or, probably, both.<sup>83</sup>

In their allusions to historical context and their use of Koranic citations the foundation inscriptions are also revealing. Koranic excerpts often allude to the purpose a structure had and the intentions of its builder. The use on monuments of Koranic texts with a propagandistic message is early attested in Islam,<sup>84</sup> and the

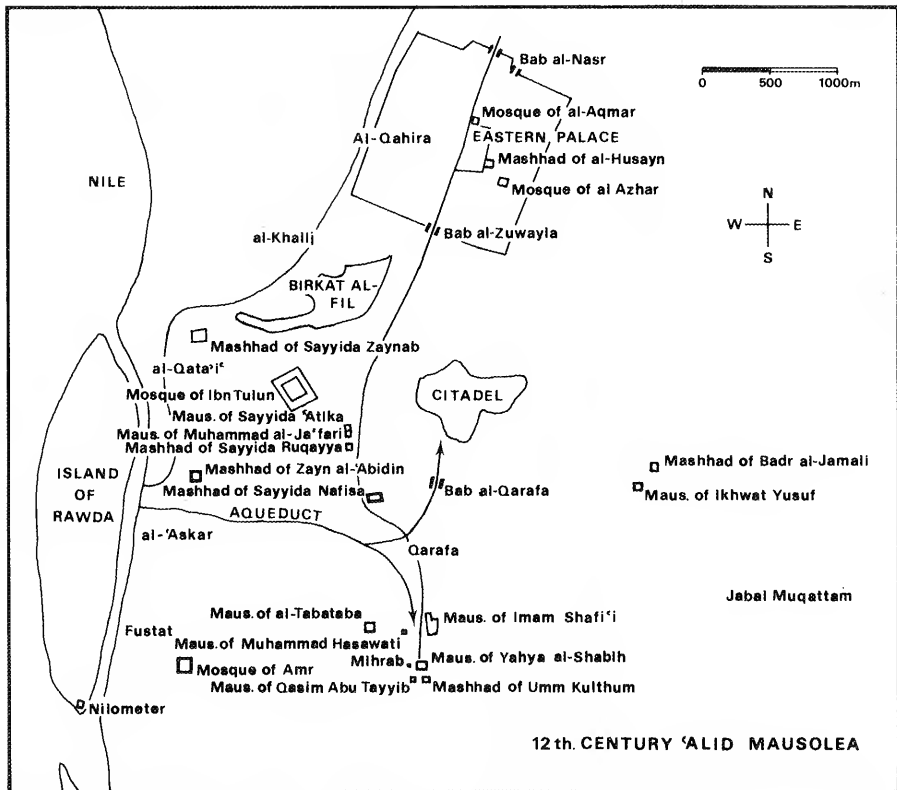


Figure 1. Twelfth-century ʿAlid mausolea

Fatimids even put them on banners and horse blankets.<sup>85</sup> The mashhads of Badr al-Jamali and Sayyida Ruqayya are especially rich in Koranic allusions exhorting the believer to follow the imam and to accept his interpretation and his intercession as the way to salvation. The exhortation, which first appears after 1122 in the mosque of al-Aqmar, to accept the mysterious ways of God in ridding the *ahl al-bayt* of abomination, is a message that shows up with increasing insistence in the mausolea of the second succession crisis. The difficulties of both crises may also be alluded to in the use of Koran 2:255, with its central question:

"Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave?"

By the time Nasir-i Khusraw visited al-Qahira in 1046-49,<sup>86</sup> there was already a popular cult of the dead, and the Qarafa area had developed considerably. Nasir-i Khusraw, however, confines most of his observations and records to a description of the Fatimid palace. He mentions the four great congregational mosques, but not, as one might expect, the tombs of the venerable Shi'i dead. His silence does not prove they did not exist, but rather that they were not yet places of official interest or patronage. It is from the sources closest to the

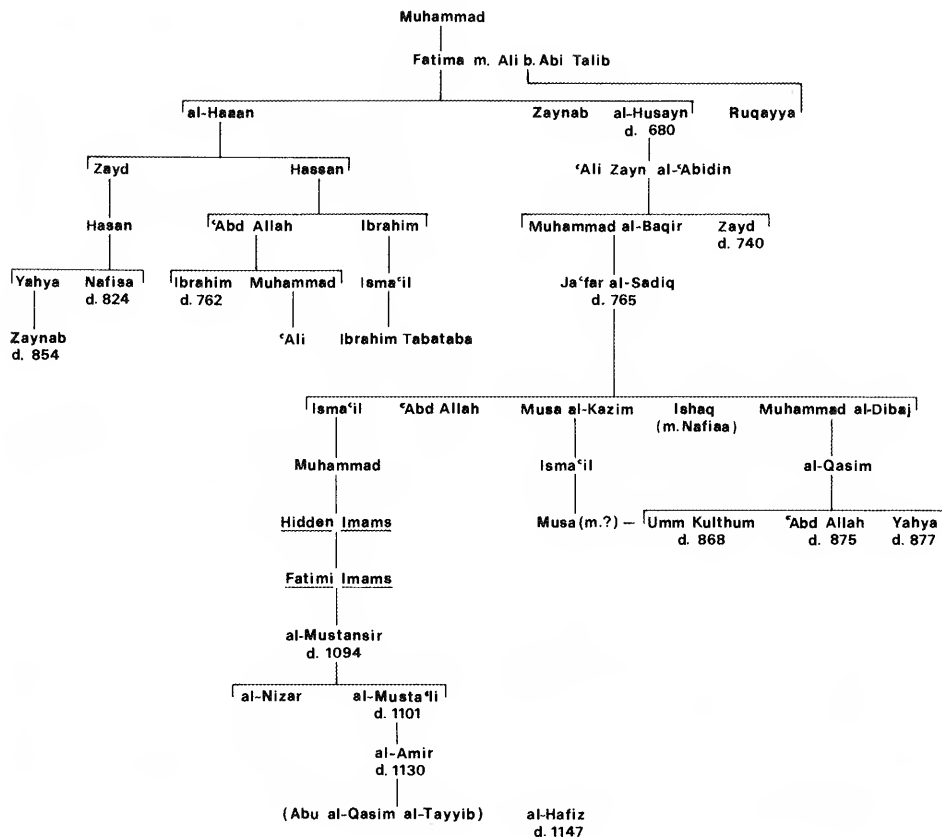


Figure 2. Genealogy of the 'Alids

period 1120-60 that we derive the fullest documentation and description of the Qarafa tombs, as for example al-Harawi, who visited Egypt in 1176-77 and Ibn Jubayr who visited it in 1183-84.

Commemorating the 'Alid dead did not begin with the Fatimid dynasty. The earliest stela from Egypt citing a member of the *ahl al-bayt* is dated 242 (856),<sup>87</sup> and many follow for subsequent years. On them, both in Aswan and Cairo, the deceased's lineage is traced back to the Prophet's family. Among them are the stelae of 'Abd Allah and Yahya ibn al-Qasim (d. 875

and 877, respectively). The visitation of burial places was a well-established practice among the inhabitants of Fustat in the pre-Fatimid era.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, so far as we know, the funerary practices of the Fatimid imams were quite different from those of their subject population. Though the caliphs claimed ultimate descent from al-Husayn, 'Ali, and Fatima, the tombs of their ancestors were hidden in an area within the palace walls, inaccessible except to the court and official dignitaries. The *turbat al-za'farān* was not a place for public visitation,

though the tombs of the imam's ancestors were venerated by the court on official occasions. Early Fatimid practice did not focus on the cult of the dead; it concentrated loyalty on the living, efficacious imam.

The arrival of Badr al-Jamali witnessed a significant change in the political and religious life of the dynasty. Order and stability, as well as economic prosperity, were reestablished. Socially there was a change in the character of al-Qahira as a royal and fortress city. The monument that Badr built is the earliest surviving from the Fatimid period that is designated a mashhad in its inscription. Badr is also, so far as we know, the first ruler of the Fatimid state to set up a public cult for ʿAlid saints. He restored the mashhad of Sayyida Nafisa, a noble ʿAlid and a saintly person whom the Sunni Imam Shafiʿi used to visit, with an inscription which designated his son al-Afdal as co-initiator in the restoration, and founded the mashhad of al-Husayn at Ascalon, where it was desirable to create a rallying point for public zeal.

Real control was now in the hands of the vizier rather than the caliph, and the caliph was consequently de-emphasized. Still the regime depended on Shiʿi loyalties for its power, and if the individual imam, the Commander of the Believers (by serving whom the believer is saved) was now less important to the state, the appeal for loyalty to his family (the Prophet's "legacy to his community") was that much more important. The family of the Prophet boasted a tradition of martyrdom, of dying for the community of Islam. Much of the success of Shiʿism in the tenth century lay in the warm and personal element of loyalty to the Prophet's family and its suffering members. In honoring the *ahl al-bayt*, Badr al-Jamali was also making an appeal to that loyalty.

After al-Jamali had indicated the way, his policy was pursued after each succession crisis. Following the heedless reign of al-Afdal, the Fatimids had to deal with the effects of the schism with the Nizaris and the ominous expansion of Crusader power in Syria. It was at that time that Ma'mun al-Bata'ihi rebuilt the tombs of the ʿAlids at the already revered Qarafa and perhaps planned to create a new rallying point within the city walls with the mosque of al-Aqmar.

But the greatest number of new and restored mausolea date from after the death of al-Amir. His successor's claim to the imamate was not recognized by many Ismaʿilis. Ismaʿilism as a state religion, after the 1094 and 1130 succession crises, seemed dead. The active Ismaʿilis were the Nizari and Tayyibi branches, and not the reigning imam's followers. As a ruler in his

own right, Caliph al-Hafiz had to recognize how gravely the religious loyalties which undergirded the state had been weakened. Then and under his successors, attempts to build up popular devotion to the ʿAlids and to transfer this devotion to the dynasty were so strong that new "discoveries" and "visions" spurred the loyalty of his subjects. The culmination came when one of the most revered relics of the Shiʿa, the head of al-Husayn, discovered earlier and elsewhere by Badr al-Jamali, was brought right into the heart of the royal city, where it became the object of passionate popular veneration.

After the passing of the Fatimids, their Sunni successors the Ayyubids also found that monumental funerary architecture was an expedient adjunct to state policy. Contrary to al-Maqrizi's assertion with regard to the Ayyubids—"Such is the practice of kings, always to efface the traces of their predecessors and to obliterate the memory of their enemies"<sup>88</sup>—they did not efface the cult places of the ʿAlid dead. Instead, the Ayyubids themselves, in a triumphant assertion of their own orthodox rule, built in the midst of the ʿAlid tombs the largest single-domed mausoleum in the Qarafa, a shrine to a great Sunni teacher and saint, Imam Shafiʿi, which was architecturally, decoratively, and functionally a successor to the Fatimid mausolea.

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#### NOTES

1. F. Wüstenfeld: "Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen," *Abhandlungen des Königl. Gesellschaft des Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1880), 26:71, 86-87, 97.
2. Al-Maqrizi, *al-Mawāʿiz wa'l-Iʿtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa'l-Āthār*, 3 vols. (reprinted from the Bulaq edition, Cairo, 1270/1853-54), 2:125.
3. *Ibid.*, 3:447.
4. *Ibid.* *Baraka* is a beneficent force of supernatural origin, emanating from individuals during their lifetime and after their death. For the life of Sayyida Nafisa, see P. Ravaisse, "Sur trois mihrabs en bois sculpté," *Mémoires de l'Institut Egyptien* 2, pt. 2 (Cairo, 1889): 661-65; and Yusuf Rajib, "Al-Sayyida Nafisa, sa légende, son culte et son cimetière," *Studia Islamica* 44-45 (1976).
5. Muhammad ibn al-Zayyat, *al-Kawākib al-Sayyarah fi Tartīb al-Ziyārah* (Cairo, A.H. 1325), p. 33.
6. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khallikān, *Dhayl Wafayāt al-Aʿyūn*, trans. M. G. de Slane as *Biographical Dictionary* (Paris, 1843), vol. 3, p. 571.
7. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d. ed. (henceforth *EF*), s.v. "Bakī al-Gharḳad."
8. Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawākib al-Sayyarah*, p. 30.
9. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Maqqdisi, *Aḥsan al-Taʿāsim*, p. 209, as quoted in R. Blanchère, "L'Agglomération du Caire vue

- par quatre voyageurs arabes du moyen âge," *Annales Islamologiques* 3 (1969): 11. He visited Cairo between 969 and 985; al-Maqrizī, *Khitat* 3:437.
10. Abū'l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn Jubayr, *Rihla*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst as *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* (London, 1952), p. 38.
  11. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-Nuẓār fī Gharrāb al-Amsār*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb as *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354* (Cambridge, 1958), vol. 1, p. 45. This is later than the Fatimid period, but it describes the *ziyārat al-qubūr*; see also L. Massignon, "La Cité des Morts au Caire: Qarāfa—Darb al-Aḥmar," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 57 (1958): 25-79.
  12. Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, 3:16.
  13. K. A. C. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (hereafter *MAE*), (Oxford, 1952), 1:11-15, found the scanty remains of a building which he reconstructed as a nine-bay open-canopy oratory and identified as belonging to the Tabataba family, dating it to 334 (945).
  14. Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary* 3:16.
  15. E. Combe, Jean Sauvaget, Gaston Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (henceforth *RCEA*), (Cairo, 1931-75), 2:137.
  16. Al-Maqrizī, *Khitat* 3:448; Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, trans. Janine Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus, 1957), p. 82; Ibn Jubayr, *Travels*, p. 96; Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawakib al-Sayyarah Zayyat*, pp. 96, 87-88.
  17. Ibn Muḥyassir, *Akhbār Miṣr: Annales d'Égypte (Les Khalīfas fatimides)*, ed. H. Massé (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1919), p. 62. This same piece of information is related by Ibrāhīm ibn Duqmaq, *Kitāb al-Intiḥār li-Wāsiṭa 'Aqad al-Amsār*, ed. Vollers (Cairo, 1893), 4:121, who wrote more than a hundred years after Ibn Muḥyassir.
  18. Creswell, *MAE*, 1:230.
  19. *Ibid.*, pp. 269-70.
  20. Al-Harawī, *Guide*, p. 82.
  21. Actually the cenotaphs of al-Qasim's sons, 'Abd Allah and Yahya, who had been invited to come to Egypt by Ahmad ibn Tulun, are now to be found in the mausoleum known as Yahya al-Shabīlī, erected c. 1150 in the hawsh of the mashhad of al-Qasim Abu Tayyib. Muhammad al-Dibaj's revolt appears in Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1879-1901), 3:989-95, and Yusuf Rajib, "Les Sanctuaires des gens de la famille dans la Cité des Morts au Caire," *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 51, fasc. 1-4 (1977): 53.
  22. Creswell, *MAE*, 1:265, fig. 160. The mihrab was discovered in 1903, but has since been destroyed (pls. 3c and 114c).
  23. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.
  24. P. Ravaisse, "Trois mihrabs," p. 652, quoting from Nur al-Absur (Bulaq ed.), pp. 178-80.
  25. A previous example of this cresting is to be found around the sahn of the mashhad of Badr al-Jamālī (Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pl. 48a), and embedded in remnants of the later additions to the mosque of al-Azhar, discovered by Christel Kessler in 1960. Examples of the exterior cresting of the mosques of Ibn Tulun and of al-Hakīm are very different. Badr al-Jamālī's cresting imitates that of al-Azhar, the first Fatimid congregational mosque and headquarters of the Fatimid missionary movement.
  26. Ravaisse, "Trois mihrabs," p. 652, quoting from Mas'ūdī, *Prairies d'Or*, 4:52.
  27. This information seems to come from Su'ād Māhīr, *Masājid Miṣr wa-Awṭiyā'uha al-Ṣāliḥīn* (Cairo, 1973), 2:117-19, who has proposed this identification for 'Atika, with no supporting evidence.
  28. Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, *Compte rendu des exercices, 1915-1919*, p. 24.
  29. Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pl. 117b; the bosses are filled with a fluted spiral.
  30. The monuments have suffered damage even since they were restored by the Comité, and the inscription has lost many words since it was first read by Gaston Wiet, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, pt. 1, *Égypte* (hereafter *MCIA Égypte*), (Cairo, 1929-30), 2:196. By now the whole mihrab has disappeared; between 1978 and 1981 it was hacked from the wall, and the niche today is set in a plain plaster wall.
  31. Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pls. 80b and e.
  32. It is not later than 1125, the date of the mosque of al-Aqmar, because some of the decorative features of al-Aqmar which are incorporated in subsequent buildings do not appear in what remains of 'Atika.
  33. Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 92; al-Maqrizī, *Khitat* 3:449, says that Umm Kulthum was "the mother of Ja'far b. Musa b. Isma'il b. Musa Sakazim [sic] b. Ja'far al-Sadiq" (i.e., married to her second cousin, Musa al-Qazim's grandson).
  34. 'Alī Pasha Mubarak is the only source that mentions the mosque/mashhad of Sayyida Zaynab, though very briefly, and dates it architecturally to the nineteenth century. See *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Jadida al-Taūfiqiyya li-Miṣr al-Qāhira* (Cairo, 1888), 3:195. Zaynab's genealogy is given by Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawakib al-Sayyarah*, p. 33, and Y. Rajib, "Nafisa," p. 84. Most people in Cairo today believe that the Zaynab honored here is the sister of al-Ḥusayn who survived the massacre at Karbala, even though she died and is buried in Medina.
  35. Al-Harawī, *Guide*, p. 82, and Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawakib al-Sayyarah*, p. 184.
  36. *MCIA, Égypte* 2:204, quoting Shihab al-Din Yāqūt, *Muṣam al-buldan*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1866-73), vol. 4, p. 554.
  37. Williams, "Cult of 'Alid Saints, Pt. I," p. 41. Another example is the mosque of the Amir Juwamard, which the foundation inscription on a plaque over the door states was constructed (in response to a dream) over the tomb of Ja'far al-Sadiq in 497 (1103) (*MCIA, Égypte* 2:160). Ja'far al-Sadiq, who died in 765, is not buried in Cairo. Al-Maqrizī attributes the confusion to the fact that one of the sons of Badr al-Jamālī was named Ja'far, and it is his tomb that the common people refer to as being that of Ja'far al-Sadiq (al-Maqrizī, *Khitat* 1:224).
  38. Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawakib al-Sayyarah*, p. 184.
  39. *RCEA*, 8:180-81.
  40. For further discussions on early Isma'ili doctrine, see H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris, 1964); W. Ivanov, *The Rise of the Fatimids* (Oxford, 1942); W. Madelung, "Das Imamāt in der frühen Ismailitischen Lehre," *Der Islam* 37 (October, 1961): 43-135; S. N. Makarem, *Political Doctrine of the Isma'ilis* (New York, 1977), and M. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (The Hague, 1978).
  41. Corbin, *Philosophie islamique*, pp. 111, 116.
  42. *Ibid.*
  43. This pattern is unusual, and its only vaguely similar antecedent appears in a flat mihrab attached to one of the piers in the mosque of Ibn Tulun by al-Aḥdāl in 1094 (Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pl. 77). The two tenth-century mihrabs in Ibn Tulun that were discussed in connection with the decoration of the façade

- of al-Aqmar contain the shahada in a frieze over their tops (Williams: "Cult of ʿAlid Saints, Pt. I," pp. 45-46). Al-Afdal's mihrab also contains the shahada, but it is the Shiʿi version: "There is no god but God, Muhammad is the Prophet of God, ʿAli is the wali of God."
44. Makarem, *Political Doctrine of the Ismaʿilis*, p. 30. Laila Ali Ibrahim kindly read these citations for me.
  45. A. Patricolo: "Il Masciad di as-Sayda Ruqayya," *Dedalo* 3, fasc. 10 (March 1923): 628-32.
  46. *RCEA*, 8:213. There are four lines of floriated Kufic on the four sides of the cenotaph, but only sides 2 and 3, with historic information, are quoted.
  47. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 3:451.
  48. *Ibid.*, 3:458.
  49. The fullest accounts of the life of Nafisa, the daughter of al-Hasan b. Zayd b. al-Hasan b. ʿAli b. Abi Talib, are to be found in al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:446-49, and Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawakib al-Sayyarah*, pp. 31-36. Neither Nasir-i Khusraw nor Ibn Jubayr mentions the shrine. Al-Harawi includes it among the mashhads to be found near the mosque of Ibn Tulun (*Guide*, p. 82), and Ibn Battuta describes it as being of "elegant construction and resplendent brightness" (*Khitat*, p. 46). See also Yusuf Rajib, "Une Description arabe inédite du mausolée d'al-Sayyida Nafisa au Caire," *Arabica* 33 (1976): 37-41.
  50. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 3:449.
  51. *Ibid.*; *MCA*, *Egypte*, 1:63-64; *RCEA*, 7:248-49.
  52. Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 2, pl. 54. This is the type of crescent found in the mashhad of Badr al-Jamali and around the hawsh complex of Muhammad al-Jaʿfar, Sayyida ʿAtika, and Sayyida Ruqayya (see above, n. 25).
  53. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 3:449.
  54. *MCA*, *Egypte*, vol. 2, pl. 1, no. 1.
  55. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 3:450-51.
  56. Massignon, "Cité des Morts," p. 67.
  57. *RCEA*, 6:73.
  58. Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawakib al-Sayyarah*, p. 283.
  59. A triple mihrab, as opposed to three mihrabs, is one in which three niches are joined together with stucco decoration to make one unit.
  60. See above, n. 43.
  61. Compare Creswell, *MAE*, vol. 1, pl. 118 with pl. 90b. Furthermore, the braided pattern between the *lam's* which appears in the word "Allah" on the left-hand niche does not appear before a similar one in the inscription of the sahn of al-Aqmar of 1125.
  62. Creswell, *MAE*, 1:234-36.
  63. *Ibid.*, pp. 264-70.
  64. *RCEA*, 2:182; for ʿAbd Allah's inscription, see pp. 173-74.
  65. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88; for ʿAbd Allah's inscription, see p. 175.
  66. *MCA*, *Egypte*, 1:24.
  67. This study does not consider the small tomb opposite the khanaqah of Baybars al-Jashankir (no. 479 in the *Index*), nor a small tomb discovered by Laila Ali Ibrahim in ʿAbbasiyya (destroyed between 1978 and 1981), nor the mausoleum of Shaykh Yunus, (no. 511 in the *Index*) located in the cemetery north of the Bab al-Nasr, all from the Fatimid period, because nothing textual, epigraphic, or decorative connects them with the ʿAlid saints.
  68. For contemporary examples, see the bottom portion of the central arched area of the façade's left wing in the mosque of al-Aqmar, and the shape of the windows in the transition zone of the domes of Sayyida Ruqayya.
  69. Creswell, *MAE*, 1:271-73, pl. 96.
  70. Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbar Mizr*, p. 38.
  71. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 3:437-38. Al-Maqrizi, in his section on the mashhad of Zayn al-ʿAbidin, is very careful to emphasize that, though the mausoleum is commonly referred to as that of Zayn al-ʿAbidin, it is really his son Zayd who is buried there.
  72. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 3:438-46. The story of how the head of Zayd ibn ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin was found in Fustat is as improbable as the finding of the head of al-Husayn in Ascalon. Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad al-Tabari in his *Taʾrikh*, Cairo ed., vol. 8, p. 189, says the head was exhibited at Damascus, Mecca, and Medina. There is no reason to believe it was ever in Fustat. It seems all the more significant that it was "found" there at a time when it could fill some serious religious and political needs of the dynasty.
  73. *MCA*, *Egypte*, 2:213; *RCEA*, 8:267.
  74. Ibn al-Zayyat, *Kawakib al-Sayyarah*, p. 184.
  75. Here at least is a tenuous connection with Egypt, because Muhammad had a large number of followers there, and his son ʿAli was arrested by the Abbasid governor (see *EP*, s.v. "Muhammad").
  76. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 3:399.
  77. *Ibid.*
  78. *Ibid.*, 2:162.
  79. *RCEA*, 9:21.
  80. Wüstenfeld, "Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen," pp. 100-01.
  81. Ibn Jubayr, *Travels*, p. 37. A disposition similar to that of the sanctuary of the mashhads of Badr al-Jamali and Sayyida Ruqayya.
  82. *Ibid.*
  83. Nor is this perhaps the first time such a manipulation had taken place. Illuminating documentation on this point has been supplied by Jonathan M. Bloom in his unpublished doctoral thesis for Harvard University, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture: Islamic Art in North Africa and Egypt in the Fourth Century A.H. (Tenth Century A.D.);" (June 1980). Analyzing the contents of 4,000 published tombstones from the years 809 to 1000, he noted that their numbers seemed to be equally divided between men and women, and the number of tombstones for both sexes seemed to peak in the decade 854-64 (p. 135). He also discovered that the number of those that contained the Shiʿi *taṣliya* (blessings of God upon the Prophet Muhammad and his family) rose significantly in the fifty years between 912-21 and 960-70, at a time when the general use of tombstones had decreased and that, of these Shiʿi tombstones, 54 percent in 912-21 and 60 percent in 960-70 belonged to women. According to Bloom these statistics indicate that a Fatimid Ismaʿili propaganda effort was at work, promulgated by a clandestine missionary movement (*daʿwa*), which was established and flourished in the first half of the tenth century, after the Fatimids' first two abortive military attempts to establish themselves in Egypt in 913-14 and 919-20; that this clandestine propaganda effort was centered in the cemetery area, "a natural place in which to work, because of the ʿAlid emphasis on genealogy and the existence of graves of ʿAlid descendants, and where there were large groups of pious religiously active people far from the reaches of official authority and religion" (p. 149). Finally this conversion success made the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969 much easier. It seems plausible to assume, therefore, that if popular support for the Fatimid cause

had been gained through propaganda efforts in the cemetery at the beginning of the period, at a later time of internal crisis it would again be to the popular support represented by the cemetery-visiting population that the government would turn.

84. Cf. Oleg Grabar, "The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959). A few other examples: around the Nilometer of Rawda are Koranic citations (16:10-11 and 14:37) which refer to water and the cultivation of the land; over the entrance to the mosque of al-Hakim, on a plaque which has now disappeared, was 28:4, a verse pertaining to the duties of the ruler; 9:18 is both popular and relevant for the founding of mosques.
85. Wüstenfeld, "Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen," p. 31.
86. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safar Nama*, ed. and trans. Charles Schefer as *Sefer-Nameh* (Paris, 1881), p. 204.
87. Gaston Wiet, *Stèles funéraires* (Cairo, 1936), 2:15; *RCEA*, 2:299-300.
88. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 2:18.